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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0553
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 1019
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

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STATE FOR ISN/CB, SCA/PB, VCI/CCB, L/ACV, IO/UNP,
SECDEF FOR OSD/ISP
JOINT STAFF FOR DD PMA-A FOR WTC
COMMERCE FOR BIS (GOLDMAN)
NSC FOR LEDDY
WINPAC FOR WALTER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PARM PK PREL CWC

SUBJECT: PAKISTANI CANDIDATE FOR CRITICAL OPCW CHAIRMANSHIP

This is CWC-83-07.

¶1. (U) This is an action message) see para 8.

¶2. (SBU) Summary. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will hold a five-year Review Conference in April 2008, only the second such conference in its ten-year history. Negotiations are in full swing to choose a chairman, a critically important player in guiding the Conference, and potentially the future of the Organization. Iran is working to take the chair, an outcome the U.S. would block. The Pakistani ambassador accredited to OPCW, Sibte Yahva Naqvi, is willing to allow himself to be put forward for the chair, but faces mandatory retirement in November. He believes US support for his candidacy with his Foreign Ministry would enable him to extend his tenure long enough to chair the Review Conference in April. End Summary.

¶3. (SBU) BACKGROUND: The second Review Conference (RevCon) on the implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention, an extraordinary conference convened by the treaty's implementing organization once every five years, will be held in April of 2008 in The Hague. Preparations are well under way. Discussion over who will chair the conference has recently moved into high gear, and has raised a significant problem: although procedurally the matter is not ironclad, there is a strong expectation that the Conference should be chaired this time around by a representative of the Asian regional group. The Japanese have advised our delegation that Iran is putting forward its candidacy within the Asia Group and that no one else had yet come forward. The Asia Group rarely discusses anything or contests its regional candidacies for leadership positions. Japanese delegate told Del Reps in confidence that his government would not oppose Iran publicly, nor did he expect any other Asian delegation to do so.

¶4. (SBU) Although the U.S. (and others) can and would block Iran's taking the RevCon chair, we would prefer that Iran not be presented as the Asian candidate for a larger battle over the chairmanship, where consensus would be much more difficult to achieve. The OPCW has, to date, operated successfully by consensus. India apparently was the only

other delegation that had initially expressed any interest in the chair, but their status as a chemical weapons possessor state makes that problematical.

¶15. (SBU) Ambassador Javits spoke with the OPCW Director-General (DG) to discuss alternatives, particularly other potential candidates from the Asia Group. Most of the likely candidates are unwilling or will be unavailable. Both Amb. Javits and the DG believe Pakistani ambassador Sibte Yahya Naqvi would be personally capable in the chair and could likely gather consensus support for his candidacy -- the right ingredients to sidetrack Iran's ambition. However, Naqvi is subject to mandatory retirement (for age) and due to leave in the next few months.

¶16. (SBU) The Ambassador phoned Naqvi on October 16, who came over right away to see him and express his interest. Naqvi is willing to arrange support in the Asian group which would come from them, not him, so as not to directly oppose Iran. However, he had to check with his government on whether he could be extended to serve through the RevCon. He phoned Amb. Javits the next day to say that his government has the proposal under consideration. Naqvi explained that his foreign Minister had agreed to his staying on for a couple of months in 2008 but that he needs US reinforcement (a call from our Ambassador in Pakistan to the Foreign Minister) for extending his term through April.

¶17. (SBU) The procedural questions on the regional rotation of the chairmanship for the RevCon would be much easier to resolve if a consensus candidate emerges for the post. We believe Naqvi is qualified to be that candidate, especially as he services as coordinator for the Asian regional group. Urgent action is needed now to avoid the debacle of a fight over Iran's candidacy at the upcoming Conference of States Parties in early November.

¶18. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Delegation requests Department's authorization for Embassy Islamabad to approach the Pakistani Foreign Minister to urge favorable consideration for Ambassador Naqvi's request for an extension through April 2008 in order to serve as chairman of the OPCW Review Conference. This position would be good for Pakistan, particularly if Naqvi steers the Conference productively, as we believe he would. The OPCW has a low public profile among international organizations, but a well deserved reputation as one of the most effective.

¶19. JAVITS SENDS.
Arnall